



The Tuscan Child

Rhys Bowen

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From New York Times bestselling author Rhys Bowen comes a haunting novel about a woman who braves her father's hidden past to discover his secrets...

In 1944, British bomber pilot Hugo Langley parachuted from his stricken plane into the verdant fields of German-occupied Tuscany. Badly wounded, he found refuge in a ruined monastery and in the arms of Sofia Bartoli. But the love that kindled between them was shaken by an irreversible betrayal.

Nearly thirty years later, Hugo's estranged daughter, Joanna, has returned home to the English countryside to arrange her father's funeral. Among his personal effects is an unopened letter addressed to Sofia. In it is a startling revelation.

Still dealing with the emotional wounds of her own personal trauma, Joanna embarks on a healing journey to Tuscany to understand her father's history—and maybe come to understand herself as well. Joanna soon discovers that some would prefer the past be left undisturbed, but she has come too far to let go of her father's secrets now...

The Tuscan Child Details

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Linda says

"Sometimes you make choices in life and sometimes choices make you." (Gayle Forman)

Hugo Langley, an RAF pilot, finds himself behind the controls on a bombing mission near the northern hills above Lucca, Italy. December of 1944 brings no choices, only commands from the powers that be. The Germans have taken over the area and Langley and his crew are in a destiny to stop them.

Once airborne, Hugo and his co-pilot have been hit by enemy fire. Too late for the co-pilot, but Langley parachutes and miraculously hits the ground still alive. Desperately, he wraps up the parachute even though he is in extreme agony from a bullet wound to his leg. He crawls behind a tree and passes out.

Hugo's eyes open to what he perceives to be the face of an angel. It is Sofia Bartoli from the tiny village of San Salvatore who was picking random mushrooms in the area. In his broken Italian, Hugo describes his situation and Sofia describes hers. The Germans are a threatening force and both Englishman and Italian woman are in danger of being discovered.

Rhys Bowen fast forwards this story to 1973 and swoops it down amidst the surroundings of Langley Hall Estate. Sir Hugo Langley has passed away and his only child, Joanna, has come to claim his things. She has been studying law and preparing to take the bar exam. Langley Hall had been sold and turned into a private school because of vast debts.

As Joanna packs away and sorts through years of items, she comes across a letter to a mysterious Sofia from San Salvatore. Joanna had no knowledge of her father's plight in Italy during the war. Determined to find out more, she travels to this isolated village to find out what she can and to come to know this man who was her father.

The reader leans in as Bowen tells a story like no other with much detail and laces it with quick dialogue and a shifting storyline from one generation to another. She brings the warmth of Italy with its rich countryside and its hearty people into play. There are curious characters both on the English front and in the Italian setting. But make no mistake, a dead body will find its way to floating in a village well. Those above-mentioned choices will certainly take seed from the past and sprout into the present with consequences both good and bad. A delightful read by the very talented Rhys Bowen.

I received a copy of *The Tuscan Child* through NetGalley for an honest review. My thanks to Lake Union and to Rhys Bowen for the opportunity.

🌸?RoryReads?🌸 says

5 Stars. Wonderful.

When Joanna Langley's father Hugh passes away in 1973 she returns home to arrange his funeral and sort out his possessions. Among his things she finds a small box and within it a letter addressed to an Italian woman named Sofia. Joanna wasn't close to her father, a rather cold and withdrawn man who became even

more distant after the death of Joanna's mother. The mysterious letter gives Joanna a glimpse into her father's heart, revealing to her a man very different from the one she knew. In an effort to understand her father's past she decides to go to Italy and discover what happened to him there in 1944 and, if possible, to find Sofia.

What Joanna doesn't realize is that not everyone in San Salvatore wants her digging up the past. There are secrets some will do anything to protect and when Joanna becomes a suspect in a murder investigation, who can she trust?

This is such a wonderful story, with beautifully drawn characters and an amazing Italian setting. There's heartache, great food, romance and a satisfying mystery. I'll be reading this one a second time.

Thank you to NetGalley for a copy of the book in return for my honest review.

Liz says

Barely 3 stars.

I had enjoyed *In Farleigh Field*, so I was pleased to get an advance copy of this novel. Bowen is again covering the time period of WWII. The book is told in two parts, Hugo Langley's escape after his plane goes down over Tuscany in 1944 and his daughter Joanna's return to their home after his death in 1973 and subsequent trip to Italy.

This book starts off slowly. I wasn't immediately invested in Joanna's story. For starters, I had trouble identifying the era. The only time the 70s came through was when Joanna was explaining why she was a solicitor rather than a barrister. It took me right back to my own story, back when I was starting off in banking and told I couldn't enter commercial lending. In both cases what we lacked was down below not up above.

Luckily, Bowen does a much better job placing you in Tuscany than in time. Her descriptions took me right back there. And don't read this while hungry, she does a great job describing the food.

But overall, the book had trouble holding my interest. Even with a murder, it lacks suspense. I could see where things were going from miles away. Also, there are several implausible scenes in the book, especially at the end. The only good news is that there is a big twist I didn't see coming in Hugo's story.

My thanks to netgalley and Lake Union Publishing for an advance copy of this book.

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From reader reviews:

Ryan Mendoza:

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